

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MANAMA 000379

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR DS/IP/NEA, M, S/CT, DS/ATA, INR, DS/ITA, NEA/EX,  
AND NEA/ARP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/16/2014

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [BA](#)

SUBJECT: IT MUST NOT FAIL -- BAHRAIN'S FORMULA ONE GRAND  
PRIX SECURITY PLAN

Classified By: Robert S. Ford, Charge d'Affaires,a.i. Reasons 1.5(B).

11. (C) SUMMARY: On 03/16/2004, RSO coordinated a meeting with top MOI officials to discuss the GOB's security plans for the upcoming 2-4 April 2004 Bahrain Formula 1 (F1) Grand Prix. As the first such motorsport event ever held in the Middle East, the Bahrain Grand Prix has captivated the nation while presenting monumental challenges to the GOB to have the technical and security aspects ready in time. With an anticipated 550 million worldwide viewers and an unprecedented domestic capital investment, the Bahrain Grand Prix could prove decisive in the country's future legitimacy as a sporting, business, and tourism destination. From a safety and security point of view, the advisor to the Interior Minister stated most candidly to the RSO that F1 "will work; it must not fail. That is not an option." The MOI's preparations are impressive, and in summary reflect in part the participation of several senior MOI officials in ATA training courses. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) WHO IS INVOLVED? The Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) oversees motorsports and sets the standards. The Formula One conglomerate, headed by Bernie Ecclestone, drives event scheduling and enforces technical and security requirements for host venues. For the Bahrain Grand Prix, F1 expects 550 million television viewers and about 40,000 to 45,000 attendees. The GOB has heavily invested time and money (over BD 56.2 million -- USD \$150 million on facility construction alone) and massively hyped this immense multi-national event. Nearly all tickets are sold, according to the senior Ministry of Interior advisor. The organizers do not have an idea from where visitors will originate as corporations have purchased large blocks of seats and distributed them to their clients and staff, however. Noteworthy attendees will include King Abdulla of Jordan, the Duke of York, King Mohammed of Morocco, the Sultan of Brunei, of course the Bahraini ruling class, and countless VIPs and so called "VVIPs." Gulf Air is the Grand Prix's major corporate sponsor.

13. (C) THE VENUE. Bahrain had no pre-existing support infrastructure or even a motorsport industry before winning the bid to host this race. Out of a stretch of barren, southwestern desert, which by driving is 35km from downtown Manama, the GOB has created the Grand Prix circuit. General admission guests will watch the race from two main grandstands, two temporary grandstands, and a desert standing area. VIPs will observe from either the exclusive "VIP Tower" or the invitation-only paddock area. The entire facility is surrounded by fencing and the terrain, save a small ridge behind the track, is flat and open. The GOB improved and widened the road system leading to the track and anticipates altering traffic flows to support increased ingress before the races and egress afterwards.

14. (C) SECURITY COMMAND AND CONTROL. The MOI is the lead agency for Grand Prix security. Using a British system to designate echelons of command, the MOI Undersecretary is designated the "Gold Commander," and overall in charge of the security plan. Subordinate "Silver" and "Bronze" Commanders have assigned disciplines of responsibility such as traffic control, stationary and roving posts, quick response forces, fire and medical services, public relations, and communications. MOI is working closely with the Bahrain National Security Agency (BNSA) to assess potential threats as well as to utilize the BNSA's Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) and search team capabilities. There will be four command centers. The MOI Operations Room at the MOI "Fort" is the everyday dispatch and response center for all policing and emergency communications. This is the Undersecretary's primary watch center and it will always be manned. A second Control Room will be manned at the circuit to coordinate all on-scene security and communicate with higher headquarters. MOI will also employ a vehicle-based Mobile Control room to respond to any "hot spot" or remote crisis. Finally, Bahrain's National Emergency Control Center (NECC) will be stood-up and manned by a multi-agency team on 01 April. In the event of a major crisis or emergency, the NECC supersedes all other commands and becomes the primary incident command center.

15. (C) PHASING-IN THE SECURITY. Commencing 01 March, the

MOI suspended all leave for its entire staff. Every policeman and officer is expected to be involved in the Grand Prix. Also, Bahrain Public Security (BPS), the combined law-enforcement and security arm of the MOI, has temporarily realigned from four shifts to three, thus increasing manpower on duty at any given time. Through three "Phases," the BPS is increasing its foot and vehicular patrols, uniformed and plainclothes static posts, hotel presence, and staffing around downtown, at the airport (doubling its staff), causeway, and at the track itself. 200 policemen are specially trained for VIP protection and will be fully utilized. BNSA is already bolstering vehicle and personnel searches at the airport and causeway. On 01 April, the day before the event starts, all police will be in place. At the track alone, 520 policemen will act as race Marshals. 200 of these are actually shifted to the race coordinators' staff. The other 320 will be nondescript as law enforcement officers by wearing the race Marshal uniform. They will perform the standard Marshal duties while also observing the crowd and reporting any anomalies or problems to the command center. Of course, BPS will also staff traditional police posts on the F1 complex to address normal police issues like lost items, fights, theft, etc. Every policeman at the track will be issued a small "action card" that contains a decision matrix and contact directives. In general, access to and inside the complex is staffed by the MOI and BNSA. Outside the track perimeter, the MOI and Bahrain Defense Forces (BDF, the uniformed military service), will patrol. The Traffic Directorate will very purposefully control vehicular traffic. Unlike the U.S. or the UK, Bahrain is a country where the police can simply close a major roadway or make it entirely one-way. Traffic planners intend to do just this to facilitate heavy flows into and out of the site. Also, vehicles entering the area surrounding the F1 facility must display special access passes that accompany seating tickets. Traffic police will turn-back vehicles without the proper credentials. All MOI assets will begin rehearsals and "Immediate Action" training several days before the start. Interestingly, responsibility for securing the VIP tower has been assigned to the Royal Guards, the Royal Court's bodyguard and security element. The MOI advisor advised that thus far, communication among the usually disparate Ministries and agencies has been excellent.

16. (C) CONTINGENCY. The Special Security Force Directorate (SSFD, the MOI's anti-riot unit and tactical unit) is pre-positioning several teams around the country and at the venue. They will remain in a standby posture for the duration of the event. MOI's "Flying Wing" will keep pilots and 2 Bell 412 rescue/evacuation helicopters at the two following sites: the MOI Fort and Sofra, a police camp about 10km from the F1 track. The Civil Defense and Fire Service is on full standby around the country and will have a heavy presence at the track as well. The Health Ministry has been very supportive of MOI's contingency planning. The two major trauma centers, Salmaniya and BDF Hospitals, are increasing their staffs in the event of a major crisis. Further, Salmaniya has constructed a BD 15,000 (USD \$40,000) temporary helicopter landing pad on its campus. The MOI has also arranged for Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical (NBC) standby response teams.

17. (C) STRATEGY AND PHILOSOPHY. MOI acknowledges that it is not possible to completely eliminate all risk. The Undersecretary and his senior advisors are attempting to lower the percentages for any would-be attacker or disrupter. As this is such an unprecedented, pivotal, and high-profile national event, top leaders are demanding its success. In MOI's view, the F1 circuit facility itself is one of the least likely targets of a potential attacker. Any attack of significance anywhere in Bahrain could immediately cancel the Grand Prix. For this reason, MOI is compelled to address the totality of threats and security around the country as they relate to a major event. The world's eyes will be focused on the security situation in Bahrain but, the MOI is sensitive to not render the Grand Prix a "Police Event." They will maintain a very high, overt police profile outside the perimeter, while striving to remain discreet inside. Security implementation has already begun with the initial phase-in of additional police around town. As to not shock the public, the police will gradually increase staffing through three phases. The MOI has also met with the major anti-government political societies and gained their assurances to abstain from impeding the visitors or event schedule. Further, commencing 26 March, MOI will begin a major public advisory campaign to advise the nation about changing traffic patterns, access requirements, and general security measures. MOI considers their strengths to include the facts that Bahrain is a small island with limited access points, BNSA has generally good intelligence capabilities, and all security forces are taking Grand Prix safety and security efforts seriously.

18. (C) COMMENT: We were genuinely impressed with the depth and breadth of MOI's preparations. The Ministry has been working on their plan for months. Many of the senior

policy-makers at MOI are products of multiple ATA training courses. Their thought processes (and RSO's level of access to briefs like this) are direct benefits of ATA-sponsored training in Bahrain. Post's three main concerns continue to be the "Bahraini 3" Sunni extremists at large, security at the causeway linking Saudi Arabia to Bahrain, and other general soft targets around Bahrain. Any attack would likely cancel the event and jeopardize any future legitimacy for Bahrain in the business, sporting, or tourism industries. Though we currently know of no specific threat as of yet, certainly Post is concerned that the high-profile nature of the Grand Prix presents an attractive target for any attention-seeking person or group. RSO will continue to work closely with relevant GOB offices to track Grand Prix specific threat information. The MOI directly requested of RSO to be kept informed of any/all threat information about which we learn. RSO and other Post Officers will ensure the timely passage of threat info to MOI decision-makers. RSO will make available an unclassified version of this report to share with U.S. companies and concerned citizens. END COMMENT.  
FORD